



Ilion by Luddleston

Category: The Iliad - Homer

Genre: Anal Sex, Canon-Typical Violence, Getting Together, Intercrural Sex, M/M, Multi, Oral Sex, POV Multiple, does not require prior knowledge of the iliad to enjoy, just sex in every possible direction, many dudes all falling in love, takes place during year 3 of the war

Language: English

Characters: Achilles (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Antilochus (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Apollo (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Diomedes (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Hector (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Odysseus (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Paris (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Patroclus of Opus (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Poseidon (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Sarpedon II of Lycia (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore)

Relationships: Achilles/Antilochus/Patroclus of Opus (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Achilles/Patroclus of Opus (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Apollo/Hector (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Diomedes/Odysseus (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Paris/Sarpedon

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Summary:

During the third summer of the war, the Greek and Trojan forces are at a stalemate, with neither side having made progress for months. In the Greek camps on the shore, Antilochus, Prince of Pylos and the youngest commander, finds himself amidst seething antagonism threatening to turn into full-fledged infighting. While his father is deferential to their commander-in-chief, Antilochus finds himself falling hard for the rebellious

Myrmidons and taking a lust-fueled turn into the arms of Achilles and Patroclus.

Behind the walls of Troy, Prince Hektor continues to face dismal odds of his kingdom's survival. Their only hope is their patron god, and Apollo seems to have a particular interest in Hektor. He'd probably feel luckier if Apollo's favor didn't lead him into Hektor's bedchamber so often, but he can't deny that having a god as a lover feels good—until he wakes up the morning after.

(It's a romance novel about the Trojan War.)

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

HELLOOOOOO!

It's officially my 200th work posted on AO3 and I had to make it something special, so here's the first chapter of Ilion!

"Tell me, my boy, what is the cause of this war?"

Antilochus drew his attention back to his father's unending drone now that there was a tone in it that demanded an answer. He took a moment to process, then another moment to attempt to come up with something that would not result in his father rambling for hours about the glory days. After finally realizing that was impossible, he sighed his response.

"Jealousy, I suppose?" It was by no means a complete answer but Antilochus was no seasoned strategist. Being the youngest of the commanders, it was his father's military merit that even bought him any status in the early years of the war. Since then, his own skills had been no small benefit to the Greek forces, but he hadn't had time to learn the particulars of the political landscape.

"Jealousy. Yes, that is it, in part," Nestor said, staring off over the field below them, watching the troops run through drills. Antilochus was eager to be down there with them, anticipation thrumming through his arms and shoulders and making it hard to stand still. He itched to have a spear in hand. "One man steals another man's wife and takes her to his homeland—uncouth of him, but I suppose they are barbarians—and each man both

believes they've a right to the woman, one through lawful marriage and one through a gift of the divine."

He really did not need to summarize. Antilochus knew all this before he boarded for Troy. Everyone knew this. One of his elder brothers had been a suitor of Helen's, back then. Antilochus had been too young (his brothers often joked that he was proof of the last known occasion on which his father bedded somebody until Peisistratus came along and now all those jokes would go to the baby brother), but he recalled the story well enough.

His lack of an answer did not prompt Nestor to cease. Nothing short of godly intervention could stop him on a good old-fashioned tirade.

"But one wonders whether the root of it is not that divine gift itself. They call her 'bringer of madness', Aphrodite. One wonders whether the Trojan prince Alexandros, who they call 'Paris', had any ability to defer to another goddess."

"Not everybody thinks with their—" Antilochus narrowly avoided repeating a crass rumor about Paris that floated around the camp more nights than not. "I mean, one of the other two were the obvious choices." He did not list names in case he implied that he would choose one over the other.

"Quite so. But would not Lady Athena's promise of military might cause war regardless? Would not Lady Hera's promise of kingship create conflict?" Nestor tapped the butt of his cane into the ground with emphasis. "This war is the will of the gods, nothing less. And we are bound in our

duty as warriors and as heroes to stand for those divine patrons who raise us up to power."

"So we are," Antilochus agreed halfheartedly, watching the crowd below. The neat lines had devolved into a circle as some of the commanders, who he could not identify at first from his position on the hilltop, challenged one another.

Well. There was one he could recognize, if only for the bright gold of his hair.

"The problem," Nestor continued, because when was he not continuing, "is that each side has many gods standing for them. Aphrodite bolsters the Trojans, yes, but so does Apollo and his twin sister Artemis and their mother Leto and even the river Xanthos, which some call Scamandros, which runs about the city."

As the commanders started to move, Antilochus could pick them out based on familiarity with their fighting style. Diomedes was ruthless even when not in actual combat, shutting down anyone who tried their hand at attacking him as though his hands were moved by Athena herself. He stood almost still when he was not actively fighting, unlike his challenger, who darted around enough to clearly show how he had achieved his epithet.

"And on our side there is Hera, and there is also Athena, who trained young Diomedes there from childhood and guides him." ('Young' was relative, Diomedes had several years on Antilochus but Nestor called most people 'young'.) "And opposing him, we have Achilles, who is favored by Zeus and

has a goddess for a mother. And he does not fight alone; his companion is, I believe, a descendant of Zeus and a favorite of Poseidon's."

Antilochus had heard those rumors, too. And he'd felt the earthquakes. At first he had been afraid the ground would swallow him, and then he was afraid Patroclus of Opus was crazy enough to fuck a god.

Patroclus was there now, his fighting style remarkably similar to Achilles although he was not faring well because he squared off against Odysseus, who was also bolstered by Athena. Odysseus, as well, was not above throwing sand in your eyes.

"Menelaus, King of Sparta, on whose behalf we fight, is beloved by Ares, who leads his warriors to victory." He was also conspicuously absent, although probably strategizing with his brother. "And what, my boy, do you think may become of us with so many gods on each side?"

"A lot of people are going to be killed over a very long war?" It made Antilochus' head weary and his heart ache to think of it. They all had seen the message from Zeus at the start of this war that it would last ten years and then be won. Antilochus would be almost thirty by the time it ended. Who even knew how old his father was? Probably three hundred.

"Indeed, that is true, my son. But as you know, the gods clash with one another just as easily as mortals do. Zeus and his brother do not always get along, and he does not often seem to be of one accord with his wife."

Antilochus thought this was due to Zeus having many accords with many other women, but what would he know?

"And so, you see, the squabbles between gods do not simply remain upon Olympus but descend upon the mortals they favor as well."

"Hmm." Antilochus was paying less attention now because Achilles had gotten in a very good hit on Diomedes. Gods, that man moved like he was dancing even when he fought. Patroclus was almost as fast but not nearly as graceful, although he managed to look it anyway because he kept his long black hair unbound and the way it flowed was beautiful enough to make up for the places in which his fighting was more practical.

"Do you hear what I am saying? Conflict will break out among the troops if their energies are not otherwise diverted. Antilochus, we are at a stand-still. Odysseus' contingent has had no success with bargaining for Helen's return and the Trojans have shored up their walls. The surrounding villages are thinning with people leaving Ilion or going inside the city. Certainly we have them penned, but there are a thousand ships' worth of men standing around that pen with nothing to do."

"Sport does seem to be a decent diversion when training is not happening." Antilochus watched Patroclus launch himself at Odysseus like a lion pouncing, rolling as he was dodged and pivoting to do it again. Odysseus may have been slippery, but Patroclus was younger. He'd have the stamina to win.

"Not decent enough." Nestor pointed his scepter at the brightest figure in the field as Achilles jumped so high he sailed over Diomedes' head and lashed him furiously from behind with the shaft of his spear. That Pelian ash hurt, no doubt. It was the size of a small tree. "Someone needs to ease the pressure building on his aggression. And I doubt training for battle or sport will do anything but further compound it."

"He could find a woman, then." That did always seem to let some steam out.

His father gave a rueful laugh. "You truly have not been listening to me, my boy. Lust causes as much trouble as aggression, that is what I have been saying."

"You could have said as much more succinctly," Antilochus mumbled, but apparently Nestor's hearing was still in perfect shape, because he received a hearty *thwap* with the scepter as retribution.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

Antilochus gets an unfortunate case of heat stroke, but at least the man tending to him is very handsome and kind. Oh, and he's also the Best of the Myrmidons. Later, he introduces Antilochus to Achilles: demigod, hero, Aristos Achaion, and absolute bitch.

Notes for the Chapter:

Thank you for waiting, everybody, the boys have arrived!!!!

They found something with which to occupy the soldiers, that was for certain.

How anyone expected a group of warriors to be any good at construction was dubious at best, but there were enough among them with applicable building skills. They were directing those who were useful only for their impossible strength and nothing else. Antilochus had seen Ajax carry an entire felled log on each shoulder earlier.

If the war lasted for a decade they would need more shelter than the tents, which were starting to get so many holes they could no longer be patched. They should have done this last summer, but at that point they were still afraid the Trojans would come charging out and attack at any moment.

They should have done this last *spring*, rather. It was hot in the summer, and more humid than in Pylos.

Antilochus had no semi-divine strength to offer but he did have a lot of regular human strength, as well as the eagerness that came with being the younger of Nestor's sons who had come to Troy, and the drive to prove himself to all the rest. He also did not possess so large an ego he disregarded lower-ranking soldiers with more experience as builders. Because he took their instruction, he was worked to his limits.

The summers in Troy were as hot or hotter than they were back home in Pylos, and the air was thick with humidity that even the sea breeze couldn't push off. Antilochus had stripped to the waist while he was working, which left him free of the uncomfortable feeling of clothes sticking to his chest and back with sweat, but baking in the sun all day. It was the heat, eventually, that made him so dizzy he fell off a half-built wall.

Thankfully, the wall being half-built meant his fall was broken by some support structures on the way down, but he did manage to bruise himself badly enough from shoulder to hip that someone sent him away to be checked for broken bones. He didn't *feel* anything broken, but he was sent to the physician, with a laugh from his brother that had him slinking off, embarrassed.

He untied his hair as he went, shaking out sweat, although he did think he had stopped sweating some time ago. Not because it had cooled off, but just because his body had no more. His hair falling over his shoulders created enough warmth that he was forced to tie it up again immediately.

His head was spinning by the time he reached the nearest of the long tents they were using for medical shelters, and he wondered if maybe he had somehow hit his head hard enough to have forgotten he hit his head, because he really thought he landed mostly on his side.

Antilochus was not the only one who had some sort of injury from the construction projects, but the tent was not as full as it would have been if they were skirmishing and had men who needed stitched up. Nobody was shouting and nobody appeared to be dying, so it was an altogether pleasant visit, in his opinion.

Machaon asked him what had happened, looking a little irritated, probably because toppling off a building was a terribly inglorious way to be injured, and a son of Asclepius had much better things to do than deal with his idiocy. Antilochus was told to sit and wait for attention.

He startled a bit as he was touched without warning, but it was just a damp cloth against the back of his neck which felt blessedly cool. "I'll take him from here, I think. He shouldn't be too much trouble," said a soft voice, and the healer nodded and turned away, off to inspect somebody more grievously injured.

Antilochus leaned his head forward, feeling suddenly dizzy and sick now that he'd sat down. He closed his eyes, pinched the bridge of his nose and frowned, willing the feeling to die off.

A hand reached out and felt the skin on the back of his palm, then his forehead. This too felt cool, enough that Antilochus was hard pressed not to lean into it. "You're dehydrated," said the man who was tending to him, although Antilochus could have figured that out himself.

"Mm." He hoped it passed for agreement.

"Let me get you some water while you collect yourself. Antilochus, right? You're Nestor's youngest? Thrasymedes' brother?"

He nodded. This made his head ache with renewed fervor.

By the time the man returned, Antilochus had willed away any remaining nausea and could open his eyes and lift his head to look at the person who was perhaps saving Antilochus' entire existence with the cup of water he handed him.

"Sip that slowly," said the best of the Myrmidons, who was, for some reason, helping around in a medical tent instead of doing whatever Antilochus presumed elite soldiers did all day.

He obeyed instructions, because despite technically being outranked by Antilochus, Patroclus of Opus commanded attention in a way Antilochus had only seen demigods and kings. 'God-like', indeed.

"How are you feeling?" Patroclus asked, kneeling before him and laying the back of his hand on Antilochus' forehead again, as if he was checking a child for fever.

It took Antilochus a long moment to answer because he was trying to drink more, and because he was distracted by the way Patroclus' eyes searched his face. His eyes were so dark his pupil blended in with his iris, black and

lovely, a warmth in their depths. He had very long lashes, as dark as his hair, which was pulled back from his face so he could work better but hung in long, black coils.

"Like shit," Antilochus said, honestly. "I fell off a wall. Well. Half a wall. Well, a whole wall, but it was only half-built."

Patroclus flashed a smile, his white teeth standing out against the dark of his beard and his skin. "Sorry. Not trying to laugh at you."

"Not succeeding, either, are you?"

"Hush."

He closed his mouth. Patroclus was soft-spoken because he did not need to be loud to be heard.

"I'm going to get you something for that bruise," he said, his fingertips brushing Antilochus' temple as he walked away.

Gods, Antilochus really wished he didn't look and feel like living shit right now, because Patroclus was possibly the most beautiful man he had ever met. He didn't count Achilles because although he was just as beautiful, Antilochus hadn't actually exchanged words with him in the three years he'd been at Troy. In the city-sized camp, the Myrmidons were the outliers. They

were positioned such that an attack would hit them first. It was a move that said, 'we can take it. Just try us.'

Antilochus finished his cup of water and poured another from the pitcher that sat on a long, low table which held an organized collection of medical supplies. Patroclus was on the other side, picking through them. He whistled while he sorted around, and it came out reedy through the gap between his front teeth. He knew his way around the table, picking out specific things that he wanted and dropping them into a mortar, then reaching for a pestle and deciding he didn't like the one he came back with, picking up a near-identical one instead.

"Do you often do... this?" Antilochus asked.

"Nowadays, yes," Patroclus said, raising his voice just a little over the sound of stone on stone with only a few herbs between to muffle it. "There are enough warriors on the field, we just compete to outdo one another. There are not as many medics, and always need for them, even in a stalemate." He reached out, opening his hand, and Antilochus looked curiously at it, not sure what exactly he was to do. "The water," Patroclus said.

"Oh. Here." Antilochus handed him the pitcher, and he poured a dash of water into the mortar to continue grinding whatever he'd collected into a paste. It smelled medicinal, which was a quality Antilochus' addled mind belatedly told him he ought to expect from something in the physician's tent. "You were trained by Chiron, right? Along with Achilles?"

"Yes and yes." Patroclus removed the pestle from the mortar and ran his finger around the bottom of it, scooping off a greenish-brown glob of the paste that had stuck there. "He was an incredible teacher in both warfare and medicine. There is something to be said for a man who knows how to heal as well as he knows how to harm."

"I suppose I never really considered that one could do both equally." He knew the healers who worked with his father's troops; they were not soldiers, all slim, small-framed men who had never seen battle but had seen plenty of the results of it. Many of them were elderly, having traveled with Nestor in his glory days. "That probably sounds silly. Of course someone could do both."

"Achilles is trained in the healing arts as well," Patroclus continued, coming around the table with his bowl of herbal poultice and indicating for Antilochus to show him the bruising, which was really starting to set in, from what Antilochus could tell. When he pulled his tunic down to reveal the contusion, it was mottled and red and purplish, and it ached when his movements pulled at it. "But his presence was requested at a meeting of the kings, today. He'd much rather be tending to handsome soldiers like yourself."

"I imagine most people would much rather be doing anything aside from an extensive meeting with Agamemnon holding the scepter," Antilochus said, not trying to betray how much he liked Patroclus calling him handsome. All his brothers had courted pretty girls and married them when they grew old enough, but Antilochus' skills in martial training caught the attention of a lot of soldiers and so he was more used to advances from men than from women.

Patroclus hummed thoughtfully as he looked at the damage. He gently applied some pressure to Antilochus' ribs, and Antilochus couldn't help a pained grunt. "Bruised, but not broken. Good."

"I have padding," Antilochus said. He was built like his mother, with a wide waist and a frame that easily packed on muscle and fat, unlike his father's wiry build which most of his brothers reflected. Despite being the youngest he was the largest. The tallest, too.

"So you do. You're almost as big as Ajax."

"Not quite." Telemonian Ajax was a behemoth of a man, and even Antilochus wouldn't want to go toe to toe with him. But Antilochus probably outweighed everyone else besides Ajax the greater.

"I'd not worry about you having my back in a fight," Patroclus said, an immense compliment from someone who fought alongside a demigod. The herbal paste was cold where it touched Antilochus' skin, soothing the bruises a little. "I saw you when we landed and in the first few skirmishes. You're impressive."

"My father taught me well," he said. He would not brush off the compliment, because Patroclus didn't seem to frequently give them, but he would defer it. Just a little. "That already feels better, by the way."

"It should help with the swelling." Once Patroclus had tended to him, putting a large blotch of the paste on his shoulder and another on his ribs

and a third further down near his hip, he reached for a bit of cloth and wiped his hands free. The cloth was stained as if someone had once bled all over it but it had been washed thoroughly several times since. "The heat stroke was the real concern, and the shade and water seem to be helping. You don't look so pale anymore."

He nodded. "I do feel much better. I ought to go, I'm sure you have more pressing matters to attend to." He re-pinned his tunic over his shoulders, plucking at one side to keep the damp poultice from sticking to the fabric.

Patroclus gestured grandly at the virtually empty tent. The man Machaon had been stitching up had been sent on his way by now. "Not really. Have you eaten anything?"

"Not since this morning," Antilochus said, which made Patroclus cast him a reproachful glance over his shoulder.

"It's nearly sundown."

"Well. I lost track of time." More like every time he thought he might have a chance to sit down to eat, someone had something else for him to do. This was probably how he arrived at the point at which he was overheated enough to fall over.

"Come with me," Patroclus said, clapping him on his uninjured shoulder. "Eat with us, our camp is closer than yours."

People from the different camps intermingled, but the Myrmidons always felt untouchable, as if you had to be invited to dine with them. Certainly they were much friendlier than one would expect a band of elite warriors (with possibly divine origins, depending on who you asked) but there was a camaraderie among them that made it difficult to ask to join them without feeling like the odd man out.

Being personally escorted by the best of the bunch probably was the ideal way to be introduced to them. Antilochus followed Patroclus to a group of tents that were clustered beside one dwelling and, as most of the camp, surrounded by construction of more. Patroclus headed for the singular completed structure, past wide gates, that had a frankly enormous deadbolt which looked like an entire tree trunk, and into a courtyard.

The men here were mostly people Antilochus slightly recognized in passing. He knew very few names, but could pick out Achilles' charioteer among them, as well as a few of his commanders, including an older man who must have been Phoenix. As Antilochus understood, Phoenix was somewhat of a mentor and family retainer, and a close friend of Phthia's king. It was this group of men he was being led to, the leaders and the commanders, and close comrades of Achilles who must have been close comrades of Patroclus as well.

They sat around a fire, lounging out of doors even though theirs was one of the first camps to have a finished building (reportedly just to spite Agamemnon, who was trailing behind on that particular competition, although he could not be blamed for that—commanding the force was a bit more important than construction).

There were a few women in the camp; one of them handed him a plate of food, fruit and meat and soft cheese that must have come from one of the surrounding villages, unless the Myrmidons had taken up agricultural pursuits. The woman eyed Antilochus suspiciously—on the plains of Ilion, any women at camp were not simple camp followers but all captives from the villages, their menfolk slaughtered. Antilochus supposed that to them, he was the face of a whole new horror.

He thanked her quietly for the food and for the cup of wine he was passed. If they knew how he stumbled over his words whenever he attempted conversation with any woman at all, Antilochus thought they would not be so concerned by him.

Though, he supposed, most men did not approach them looking for conversation.

The chatter around the fire was simple talk, easy to get lost in. Complaints of the heat, appreciation of the cool air after sundown, discussions of progress on turning the camp into something more permanent. Apparently the Myrmidons' positions on the edge of the camp gave them much more ease in hauling lumber from the forested areas surrounding the plains. While most of the camps had their lowest-ranking soldiers making brick and plaster buildings, Achilles' house was an almost entirely wooden structure.

"Antilochus, right?" asked one of the commanders eventually, a man who had something of the divine about him, maybe a minor god for a parent. His eyes glowed even as the camp slipped into darkness, and his hair was piled in a massive mound of curls, with tiny shells like those from a riverbed strung through the strands. His skin was cool gray instead of tan or brown,

and his palms and soles were blue. He had been introduced to Antilochus as Menesthios, one of Achilles' commanders and also his nephew (although he was older than Achilles). "I ended up in a conversation with your father a few days ago."

"I'm sorry," Antilochus said, the wine dulling his sense of respect. He caught Patroclus hiding a laugh behind his hand.

"Seriously, how do you make that man stop talking?" asked Menesthios.

"You don't. Just slowly back away until you escape his periphery and then run." There was scattered laughter in response to this.

"I think that would probably work for his beloved son and nobody else," said Automedon, who was the charioteer Antilochus had finally caught a name for. He sat beside Patroclus, and had a slight enough frame that he was hard to see around Patroclus, who was just as tall as Achilles and even broader.

Antilochus leaned around so he could actually look at Automedon. "You would think so, but I have seen even soldiers under his command do it," he said.

"Not all of us are young and full of so much energy we can't sit still and listen for a moment," Phoenix chided him, eyeing him from across the fire. He was nowhere near as old as Nestor (nobody was) but certainly old enough to be Achilles' father. Despite this, his hair was not yet very thin,

and it was an unusual shade of red, faded, although it had probably been brilliant in his youth, maybe even brighter than Menelaus' auburn. His beard was almost all gray, and his temples were as well. He still retained a great deal of handsomeness. Automedon occasionally made eyes at him until his attention snapped away, as if suddenly realizing he was doing it.

"Next time I'll point him in your direction, then," Antilochus ventured, although he was not sure how Phoenix would respond to teasing. Poking at his elders was something a precocious young Antilochus had been able to do, and something he had been expressly taught not to do when he started his martial training. In this unsteady ground of someone who was his same rank but his elder, he wasn't sure where he stood.

Phoenix frowned at him and for a moment, he worried. "Gods, no. I don't need my ear talked off, Achilles chatters enough."

"Speaking of," Patroclus said, as the whole crowd of soldiers enjoying their evening meal parted, making way rather than forcing the newcomer to skirt around them.

Antilochus had seen Achilles on many occasions, usually in the middle of a battle, and he was no less intimidating here.

When Achilles was in full armor he cut the silhouette of a terrifying warrior, and when he was dressed down (sitting in an extensive meeting while armed in this heat would be horrendous), it was somehow more clear how powerful he was. It wasn't his frame, not really. He was not built like his cousin—nobody was built like Ajax—while he had muscle, he was

slimmer, a runner's build even though Antilochus had seen him fight with the power of a man thrice his size.

It was his skin, above all else, that betrayed his divinity.

All soldiers had scars, even green ones. If you didn't , you had not been properly trained. Antilochus had plenty on his arms and his shoulder, some more faded than others. Those who had been in more battles than he were littered in them. There were nicks on their knuckles, scrapes on their elbows and shins, bruises and cuts and burns, some still healing.

Achilles had none.

It was rumored that his mother had dipped him in the Styx, or set him alight and doused him with ambrosia as a baby. His immortal goddess-mother had not wanted to be stricken with a mortal son. It was also rumored that she only *had* a mortal son because prophecy dictated that her son would be more powerful than his father, and Zeus had given up on seducing her.

Achilles could easily have been a son of Zeus.

Even in the firelight it was clear that his skin was perfectly smooth, a warm bronze, his hair matching it in tone or perhaps a little lighter, the whole effect making him look like he was a statue. He moved with preternatural quickness even when he was just walking, a fluidity to his motions that was manifestly inhuman.

Antilochus had never met a god, but he had met demigods before. Nymph-born mortals were plentiful, but none of them compared to Achilles. None were so explicitly divine.

And then, that invulnerable god of a man dropped to a seat between Antilochus and Patroclus, stole a bit of meat off Patroclus' place, and said, rather unattractively around a mouthful, "that was the longest fucking meeting of my life. I swear Agamemnon gets off on the sound of his own voice, and does us the disservice of pleasuring himself before the entire audience of kings. *Ugh.*"

"How much wine do you want?" Patroclus asked, not '*do you want any wine?*'

"All of it. And I can't believe you didn't come with me. Betrayer." He spat the word but he didn't seem particularly irate with his companion, just with the situation at large.

"I had a very nice afternoon, thank you for asking. The gentleman to your left toppled over from the heat, so I nursed him back to health. And he was much more polite than you are." At a wave of Patroclus' hand, they were furnished with a large jug of wine, and he poured some in his own cup before pouring a cup for Achilles.

"Do not test me, Patroclus, I will hit you. Agamemnon brings out violence in me more so than any Trojan. It is only by the grace of the gods that I have not killed him."

"Want a spar?" Patroclus asked, despite it growing too dark to permit this.

"Maybe so." Achilles downed a full cup, which would not put his odds very well in any sparring match he entered. "I need to expend some of this irritation before I slap Odysseus."

"Him, too?"

"Always."

The other Myrmidons let this chatter go on with no particular concern. It was possible Achilles was always like this. From what Antiochus knew, he got into squabbles very frequently. There was a reason Nestor had pointed to Achilles when he warned Antilochus about men prone to creating conflict within the Greek army when there were no Trojans about to defer his anger.

Achilles' head whipped around and he looked at Antilochus, who he was sitting almost thigh-to-thigh with, since he'd fit himself in between Antilochus and Patroclus. Granted, Automedon was sitting too close to Patroclus to facilitate that on the other side, and Achilles seemed to head straight for Patroclus as he entered the camp. The two of them had been raised together, Antilochus remembered. Perhaps their relationship was similar to Antilochus and his brothers.

"Who are you?" he asked, after a moment of staring. His eyes were intense, and they seemed to reflect the firelight more than they should have, like those of the many dogs that were wandering through camp looking for scraps (the only one who gave them any was Patroclus and so there were two curled by his feet). "I've seen you before. You're good with a spear."

"Antilochus, son of Nestor," Patroclus introduced him, because Antilochus had balked. Achilles was close enough that he could smell the wine on his breath.

Achilles hummed, thumbing at his lower lip as if in thought. "I would apologize for my outburst, but that would require actual remorse, which in this case I have none. I can only say I wish we met when I was in less of a horrid mood."

"I can't say it's been a pleasure," Antilochus agreed.

His forthrightness made Achilles smile, and he playfully nudged Antilochus with his elbow. "I like you," he decided.

"Ow," Antilochus said, because Achilles had managed to jab him right where the bruising was the worst.

"He fell off a wall, Achilles, don't poke at him. I know you've no concept of what it's like to have your pointy little joints digging into a bruise but *I* do and it's unpleasant," Patroclus said. There were three dogs that had joined them now, and Patroclus was petting their ears and their chins with familiar

affection. One of them nuzzled at Achilles, and to Antilochus' surprise, despite his sour mood Achilles turned and kissed the hound on its head.

He returned to addressing Patroclus. "Next time they come calling I'm going to hide myself away. Tell them I'm ill."

"You can't get ill," Automedon noted.

"Agamemnon's face makes me sick, so I think I can. Also, I'm only invulnerable on the outside."

"I've known you for nearly twenty years and you've never gotten sick once," Patroclus noted.

"Hungover, though." Achilles raised his cup.

"Achilles, no."

He drank, and mumbled something that sounded a little like, "*Achilles, yes.*"

"You realize you are literally poisoning yourself," Patroclus said.

"Worth it."

Patroclus groaned and rolled his eyes, then leaned over and pushed Achilles' hair aside so he could talk directly in his ear. Fortunately, Antilochus had developed very good hearing from a young age, trying to listen in on meetings he was not invited to. *"If you can't get it up tonight because you're too drunk, I'm going to make you suck my cock for a week."*

Well, that was interesting.

Their companionship was not exactly brotherly, then. Antilochus carefully pretended he could not hear them whispering, his head angled like he was paying attention to the conversation Phoenix and Menesthios were having.

"Like I won't do that already?" Achilles replied. He was a little louder, the contents of his side of the conversation were not so lewd that they could be seen for what they were out of context.

What they were was a confirmation that aristos achaion regularly got on his knees for his companion. Or lay back and let Patroclus—there were all sorts of positions with which they could go at it, honestly.

"Fine. I'll make you watch me bed somebody else for a week whilst you cry and whine about how it's not you. I won't put a hand on you."

Achilles let out a little laugh. "We both know you can't do that." He wasn't even whispering anymore.

"As it happens, I've met a man who I would hope is up to that particular task." Patroclus' hand crept around Achilles' back but touched Antilochus, tucking his fingertips into the back of the sash Antilochus had tied around his waist a bit more loosely than normal so that he wouldn't aggravate his bruising. He drew away immediately, having misjudged the distance and felt up the wrong man.

"Have you?" Achilles asked.

"Indeed." Patroclus, too, was no longer whispering. "He's sitting to your left and trying hard to look like he's not eavesdropping."

Antilochus could not help but turn and stare. Patroclus was looking at him with consideration, his dark eyes glimmering in the firelight. Achilles was looking at Patroclus and Antilochus could not see his face well enough to read what expression he was sending his companion. Lover?

"I really would prefer not to be involved in your... bedroom disputes," Antilochus said.

He had to commend himself on his self control and reservation, because gods, they were both so beautiful. If one of the new trainees in his

command who fawned over him and tried to get his attention had looked like either of them, Antilochus would have taken him to bed with no hesitation.

"It's more teasing than a dispute," Patroclus said.

"Oh, so that was an empty threat." Achilles reached for the wine again and Patroclus batted his hand.

"Come inside and have a drink with us," Patroclus told Antilochus, giving the last of whatever was on his plate to yet another dog that trotted over, this one hardly any larger than a puppy. "If you like, that is. We can talk a bit."

Antilochus got the distinct feeling that this could be a very bad idea. Interpersonal dramatics were not his specialty but they seemed to be Achilles', and if Antilochus wanted to avoid conflict that could not be solved with a fist or with a blade, spending time with these two was inadvisable.

But Patroclus was charming and Achilles was intriguing, and both of them were so beautiful it was difficult to look at them without letting his mouth hang open in awe. And Antilochus was barely over twenty, particularly interested in men and these specific men, and could not have turned them down without regretting it for the rest of this war and, possibly, the rest of his life.

3. Chapter 3

The inside of the dwelling was plain, neat rows of armor laid out on wooden trunks, a low hearth set into the center of the floor, and no door separating the back from the front but a heavy curtain made of repurposed tent canvas. Patroclus and Achilles went straight for this back room but left the curtain open, and Antilochus shut the front door to hopefully avoid any disturbance.

The back room (bedroom, although there were a few beds in the front room, and Antilochus did not know who they belonged to) was a bit messier than the front, cozily scattered with cushions and blankets and homier than the preceding chamber.

Antilochus, not knowing quite where to sit, chose whichever of the cushions did not have someone's clothing draped across it. Patroclus sat beside him, relaxed as could be in Achilles room, leaning back on a plush pillow with his legs crossed at the ankles. Achilles lay on Patroclus' other side, immediately collapsing in a lazy sprawl with an exaggerated sigh.

"Forgive me for being so overly forward with you," Patroclus said, putting an arm around Achilles and letting the greatest warrior in their generation cuddle up to his chest. "It did not occur to me until after I'd propositioned you that you might yet be a virgin."

"Definitely not," Antilochus protested, still in a period of his life at which that was something which felt important. "Although I have never been with two men at once."

"And you still will not be, we are making Achilles watch," Patroclus said.

"Cruel to me," Achilles grumbled. "You said that was only if I was too drunk to be aroused."

"Are you?" Patroclus asked, a decent question, given that Achilles had been drinking so fast you would have thought the wine was immensely watered down. It had actually been quite strong.

"Not at all," Achilles said, and then rolled himself more fully atop Patroclus and kissed him.

It felt as if Antilochus was being allowed in on a well kept secret. Of course there were jokes that Achilles was sleeping with his companion, who was neither a king nor a commander, but rather a childhood friend who functioned as a combination of retainer, knight, and advisor. Most of the men who made those jokes must not have seen Patroclus—once you laid eye on him, you realized why he was around. The man was an exceptional soldier, a warrior who stood so tall and strong he was often confused for Achilles himself by those who had not been introduced.

Thersites had called Patroclus Achilles' whore, once, but if you were taking your gossip from Thersites, you were an idiot. Also Achilles had thoroughly disabused him of that notion. It was largely accepted that Achilles and Patroclus might occasionally sleep together, in the way that comrades sometimes did, and might share women, in the way that comrades

sometimes did, but that they were not lovers in anything more than a physical sense.

This was not true.

It was clear in the way they kissed, mouths slotting together in a practiced fashion, warm and melting into one another, pulling away after only a brief moment but still separating slowly enough it was clear they didn't entirely want to. Patroclus talked of making Achilles watch, but Antilochus would happily observe the two of them all night.

"A moment, Achilles." Patroclus pressed another kiss to the hollow of Achilles' neck, a place which would have been vulnerable on another man and was intimate all the same.

"I want more light to see you by, anyway," Achilles said, standing and letting Patroclus lay around, hooking his fingers through one another and stretching them over his head, the whole line of his body taut with it. His tunic was split up the sides, and he was muscled along his ribs.

"Antilochus," Patroclus said, prompting him to shift closer. Patroclus grasped the back of his neck and pulled him close, forcing Antilochus to lean with one hand planted in the bedding by Patroclus' shoulder, the other hovering tentatively over his ribcage, searching for a starting point. It was so much easier when sex happened at the tail end of a sparring match and he and whoever he was fooling around with just dragged one another in to kiss or touch with abandon. "Come here." The hand on the back of his neck gave a gentle squeeze.

Patroclus' eyes were so hooded it was difficult to see them through the thick fan of his lashes, and his lower lip shone wet with Achilles' kiss. He was propped up on one elbow so that he could reach for Antilochus, and his hair was pooling on the bedding, turning everything behind him to darkness. The light was changing in the room—Achilles must have approached with a torch. Antilochus could not bring himself to look at anything but Patroclus.



"May I kiss you?" Antilochus asked. He was close enough that the question was almost a kiss already. Their lips brushed.

There was a rustling sound as Achilles sat down beside them and fiddled around with something in the tumult of bedding. Even if Antilochus turned his head to look, he would not have been able to see Achilles, Patroclus' arm over his shoulder blocking his vision.

Patroclus was silent for a breath longer before he answered, "I think we have Achilles' attention. So, yes."

Antilochus did not kiss Patroclus as Achilles had, tender and familiar, but with the passionate press of a new romance, pushing him back into the blankets and letting him tangle their mouths. It was messy and it was *good*, warmth sloshing through Antilochus' chest as Patroclus gave a little groan against his lips, his hand slipping down from Antilochus' neck to grip his bicep.

Antilochus lifted his head briefly to gauge Achilles' reaction, and was delighted to find him sitting as though he had frozen in place. He was looking at them over his shoulder, and though the positioning of his body seemed uncomfortable to hold for an extended time, his face was split in a smile and his hand drawn up, so that he could touch his fingertip to his lower lip. He slid that finger gently back and forth, as if he wanted to mimic a fraction of the sensation being passed between his lover and Antilochus.

"Look at you two," Achilles said, his voice so soft his lips barely moved.

Patroclus gave Antilochus another kiss but made this one showier, finding the tie in Antilochus' hair and undoing it, allowing him to wind his fingers through. His opposite guided Antilochus' jaw, tipping his head so Achilles could see them better. Antilochus caught Achilles' gaze again as Patroclus dipped to kiss his neck, his beard tickling as his lips moved. Achilles had shifted so that he was no longer awkwardly half-turned, and he had spread his legs tellingly.

"I'm intrigued by you, Antilochus," Achilles said, his voice low and lazy, emanating sex. "It's rare I find a man who actually looks big enough to hold me down."

"Would you like me to? I could probably pin you both at once."

It was more a joke than anything but it made Achilles moan. Huh.

"I doubt many would expect a hero such as yourself to enjoy being dominated, Achilles."

Antilochus felt Patroclus huff a laugh into the crook of his neck and shoulder.

"Pretty much only Patroclus would expect that," Achilles said. He was laughing but it was breathy. Overcome.

Antilochus drew away from Patroclus then, shifting toward Achilles, grasping his hair at the base of his neck the way Patroclus had done to him a moment ago, hoping that Patroclus did this because his lover liked it. He was correct. Achilles' eyes rolled back for a brief moment and then he tipped his head back into the touch, baring his throat. Not as submissive a gesture as it would be for most men, but Antilochus appreciated it.

"There we go." Achilles licked his lower lip, his eyes searching Antilochus'.
"A little harder."

Antilochus' fist tightened. Achilles gave him a gratified gasp.

"You're a lion on the battlefield and a kitten in the bedroom," Antilochus observed.

Achilles' mouth dropped a little wider. Antilochus could see that he had an extra set of canine teeth, something which truly did make him look animal. More than animal. Unearthly.

"There's something about being invulnerable, Antilochus. Sensation itself is dulled. Of course I have a sense of touch but the pleasure of gentle hands and softness does little for me," Achilles said.

"That's not the most important bit," said Patroclus, who had sat up and was now leaning against Antilochus, his cheek to Antilochus' broad back.

"I already said the most important bit," Achilles replied.

Antilochus could not remember, his topmost thoughts occupied with the way Achilles' lashes fluttered when Antilochus tugged a little harder on his hair. "Did you?"

"Yes. I'm only invulnerable on the outside."

Antilochus found himself momentarily unable to breathe as the meaning of this settled in. Not only did Achilles want Antilochus to steer this particular encounter, he also wanted Antilochus to penetrate him. It was an act that was not as uncommon out here as it was in polite society, where someone would use a man's thighs instead, mostly because the proportion of men to women was very low and most of the women belonged to high-ranking officers.

But here was a high-ranking officer asking to *be fucked*, and for a moment Antilochus almost refused out of principle. But Achilles' face was coloring, pink from the wine and from his desire, and his eyes were searching Antilochus', so warm this could be nothing but genuine lust. Something about Antilochus had struck Achilles as both willing to fuck him, and unlikely to be judgmental or gossipy about it.

Not that anyone would ever believe him if he said Achilles had given him such a proposition.

He was about to say, " *yes, absolutely, can I do so immediately? And how hard exactly do you want it?*" when there was an insistent knock on the door.

"Achilles!" came a shout from outside. "Patroclus! Someone's here from across camp and wants to know if you have Antilochus in there!"

They very much had Antilochus in there, and Antilochus would like them to keep having Antilochus in there.

"What if we do?" Patroclus said, and it warmed Antilochus that Patroclus, too, wanted to keep him.

There came another voice, one Antilochus recognized, a messenger and herald that his father often employed when he did not want to do his own shouting. Nestor was never much of a shouter, anyhow. And Nestor certainly wouldn't run all the way across camp. "*Your father is asking for you!*" And then, a more distant mumble. "*He's not got anyone around to lecture.*"

Antilochus groaned, and regrettably did so loud enough that they would know he was in there whether or not they denied it. "I didn't even get to kiss you," he said to Achilles, feeling very much like he was pouting.

Achilles sighed. "I'd say to tell them to fuck off, but I don't want Nestor up my ass next time I have to meet with him."

"You did just express that you'd rather have Antilochus up your ass," Patroclus remarked.

It made Achilles laugh hard enough to give an undignified snort.

"Go on," Patroclus said, standing and then helping Antilochus to his feet, drawing him down for a parting kiss. "You can kiss Achilles next time. And hopefully we will not be interrupted before you are able to do much more to Achilles."

Achilles said, "*yes, please,*" and did not bother with standing up.

They both knew Antilochus wasn't going to let his father wait around. He did pass them a final glance over his shoulder, and found that Patroclus had settled down beside Achilles again. They would take care of one another, then. And Antilochus would be the only one left in abject sexual frustration, likely listening to more of his father's infinite wisdom (which really was helpful at most times but could usually be distilled to a sentence or two and yet took all day).

Ah, well. Sneaking away later to get himself off to the knowledge that *aristos achaion* wanted his cock was going to be pretty damn satisfying anyway.

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

Hektor and his father survey the challenge before them and the weight on their shoulders.

Notes for the Chapter:

HEKTOR TIME!!!!!! It's no secret that he's my favorite narrator in Ilion, and he's the reason the second draft is entirely focused on the Trojans! (it's ok Book 2 is Myrmidon Central)

It used to be that there was one particular section of the ramparts at which it was easiest to keep an eye on the Hellespont and observe any incoming ships. Nowadays, Menelaus' army had choked the port and spread out across the shore, spilling into the plain like wine seeping into undyed cloth.

It was not uncommon for Hektor to walk the perimeter of the walls, although each time he felt more and more like a caged beast prowling a prison from which it knew it could not force its way free.

It was uncommon to spot Priam up here, though.

Despite being the King of Troy and its commander in chief, Priam passed his military orders through his son, leaving Hektor to shoulder most of the decisions on the field. Still, Hektor knew his father bore the weight of what this war was doing to his people. With each year, Priam seemed to age ten. Andromache said Hektor did the same, and gods, was he well aware.

Of course, he had jokingly told his wife it was Paris giving him gray hair, not the battle. Very few things put a smile on Andromache's face these days and he had to make her laugh where he could.

"How are things looking, Hektor?" Priam asked, his low boom of a voice calling the soldiers manning the wall to sharper attention. He had a habit of speaking as if proclaiming to his court all the time, although lately his loud, charismatic tone was undercut with strain. Unlike Hektor, who was armored, Priam was dressed in all the trappings of a king—jewels and robes and neatly styled hair and beard—a perfect facade that Hektor could not imitate.

Hektor crossed his arms as he watched the army practically camped on their doorstep. How was he supposed to answer his father? Things were not looking good. Things had not been looking good for three years. "It seems they are digging their heels in as much as we are. They've set up permanent structures, see? Here and here."

Priam followed his indication. Of course the structures were not as permanent as the city, no stone walls that would hold up for centuries, but the perceived impermanence of tents on the beach had been one of the few things that alleviated worries that the Greeks were never going to leave.

"Is it yet too late to take them up on their offer to return Helen and her possessions?" Priam wondered, dropping his voice so that only Hektor could hear.

"Father." Hektor gave him a flat look. "Menelaus has outright said that as soon as he sees her, he is going to kill her."

"I know." He waved away Hektor's concerns. "But if I thought sending one woman to her death would save my entire city and my family, even if she were a queen, even if she were my son's wife, I would do it."

"And so you don't think it would."

Priam shook his head. "Has Paris told you what led to all this?"

"He has." Of course he had. Otherwise, Hektor would have killed him himself for his traitorous abduction of a foreign queen, and taken Helen back to Sparta himself. But if Paris told the truth (and Hektor had not known his brother long but he was well aware that Paris was a horrible liar, having discovered almost immediately that he was hiding a woman he'd kidnapped) he had been summoned directly by Hermes before Zeus and the three goddesses he had been forced to choose between.

Angering Paris by taking his wife was something Hektor was prepared to deal with. Angering Aphrodite by spurning her *gift* to Paris was not.

"I have seen Aphrodite wandering the palace," Priam said. Hektor had, as well. She wore a different mortal guise every time he saw her but there was no mistaking the way she walked and the unearthly beauty that radiated from her. Aphrodite carried herself like, well, a goddess among mortals.

"Do you really think that this war was caused by some squabbling among goddesses to determine who is the fairest?"

Of course not. Were Olympus an ordinary household, Hektor would have pinned Zeus as stirring up strife between his family, using what seemed like a small quarrel as the breaking point to naked animosity. Of course one could never know the whim of the gods. "I think that Paris choosing between them was a symbolic catalyst to what would have been a conflict that happened anyway. The gods want us to go to war with Greece, and it would have happened regardless. One woman could not have caused that, she simply happened to be the unlucky one chosen for the task."

"You are saying it could have as easily been Odysseus' wife, or Achilles', or Agamemnon's?"

"Probably not. The goddess chose well if this is what she wanted to provoke. No doubt all of them are beautiful and their husbands would do anything to have them returned, but Agamemnon is more likely to cut his losses and leave Clytemnestra," Hektor said. Helen had told him that her sister would not have gone with Paris, unwarranted bitterness with herself in her voice. As if she or Clytemnestra could have refused Aphrodite. "Odysseus would not bring such a massive force, in fact, Paris would probably find himself caught in a trap before he left the island. Achilles is no king; he could not have amassed the loyalties of the others."

Besides, there was a near-cosmic perfection to the fact that they had gone to Sparta for Paris to purify himself after accidentally killing a man, his relationship with whom was infatuation very near the sort he felt for Helen. It would be so, so easy to blame this all on Paris.

"That is the worst part of it—that the woman who was stolen happens to be the only one whose suitors all pledged to defend her marriage," Priam said. Even more proof Aphrodite had picked her for a reason.

Hektor thought that pledge was an insane thing to agree to, but he considered whether he would have done such a thing for Andromache's hand. Given how little he knew of her when they were first married, likely he would not have. Of course now, he would do anything for her, including holding the defense of an entire city to keep her safe.

"I really wish there had been a few dozen less suitors," Hektor agreed. A thousand fucking ships in his port. "Although, one wonders whether that is truly what any of them care about. A decade-old pledge should not stir the hearts and minds of the men to battle with the ferocity they use.

"Perhaps Olympus urges them toward war, in the same way we have been pushed by the gods," Priam said. It was probably true. Not that Hektor would have anything but the briefest idea of the machinations of Olympus. "That isn't what I came up here to discuss, though," he added with a wave of his hand, dismissing the moment of speculation as to the will of the gods. "What is this I hear about a covert operation?"

"That makes it sound like more than it is," Hektor said. "We are sending a small contingent, no more than five men, to investigate one of the villages. It was raided and there may still be Greek soldiers there, but they are going to be alone, not a battalion. It's a force we can pick off, and retake the village."

"We do not have the resources to defend the village after we take it," Priam noted.

"They do not know that. They may be willing to negotiate if they see us acting." He sighed, leaning against the battlement, watching the sea and the hundreds of black ships lining the shore. "That's not all of it. Our soldiers are becoming restless. They think we are losing this fight. If we let things sit at a stalemate, those attitudes will fester like an untended wound, and we will rot from the inside."

Priam gave him a considering nod. "I agree. Who were you thinking of sending?"

"Agathon, Mestor, and Troilos." Of his brothers, he could have determined a few more to send, but these three came to mind immediately.

Priam's brow worried, the lines set into his face from years of kingship deepening with the anguished knowledge that sending his sons into battle took the chance that they would not return. He wore this melancholy any time his sons fought. In some other scenario the princes may not have gone to battle, but the Greeks were camped on their doorstep with ten times the population of Troy. Every man was needed, including all forty-nine of Hektor's brothers, and Hektor himself most of all.

"I'll go with them myself," Hektor said. "If anything happens to the team and I am not with them, it would reflect poorly on me as a leader."

"Losing you would be worse than losing all the rest at once," Priam said.

He appreciated his father's regard but wore it like a heavy weight on his shoulders. "I won't be taken down in so simple an assault. And if I am, they would be insane not to try for ransom."

Priam nodded, but there was hesitation in the set of his lips.

"I'll take two of the warriors Dios leads, then. And perhaps one of our guests from Lycia, the son of Zeus."

"Take Paris," Priam said, and it almost sounded like a joke.

"That is a good idea." Hektor never saw Paris on the ramparts. "He ought to know what this war he was so instrumental in beginning is doing to his people."

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

Under cover of night, Hektor embarks on an espionage mission. Unfortunately, Paris is there.

They left under cover of night, and Paris was far too thrilled with it all.

Hektor had to constantly remind himself that this was all new to Paris, and it still felt like a game to him. Unlike Hektor, who had been raised under his father's hand to be the ideal prince, Paris had lived seventeen years of his life as a goatherd's son. It made for a good story, the lost prince returning home, but Hektor was quite tired of things that made for a good story and were in actuality extremely irritating.

"Move silently," he said to Paris, who was bouncing on his feet.

"There won't be anybody there," Paris replied with that airy, weightless way of his.

"There might be. I can hear you breathing." Hektor could hear his footsteps, too, quiet but not silent. Paris only knew the amount of stealth required to sneak around with girls in his adopted father's village.

"I can't *breathe quieter*."

They weren't even out of the walls yet, just passing through the side gate, and Paris yelped, disturbing what would have already been imperfect cover. Hektor's head whipped around as he prepared to chastise his brother, and found that their Lycian companion had simply grabbed Paris' shoulder.

"You're too edgy for this," said Sarpedon, son of Zeus, apparently a voice of reason, thank the gods. "Stay behind me. Calm your nerves."

"I don't need you to protect me," said Paris, who absolutely did.

He was nervous because he did not have his bow. The clatter of arrows against one another in a quiver would get them caught, and it would be near-impossible to shoot straight in the inky darkness of the new moon. Better to focus on close combat if they needed to. Hopefully they would not need to, but Hektor was not really one to bank on hope.

Hope would have been immediately dashed as if thrown from the height of the walls, anyway. As they crossed the plain, it became clear the village was occupied.

The two other soldiers they had brought took each flank of their party as they ducked down behind the charred-out ruins of an outbuilding. Sarpedon, continuing to be reasonable, had clapped a hand over Paris' mouth. It was hard to tell in the dark but Paris looked furious. Hektor didn't care.

They were men, but not soldiers. They spoke too loud, moved too clumsily, and spread out too disadvantageously, plus their accents were closer to Paris' than to the Greeks'. They were scavengers, then, here to pick the corpse of one of their own neighbors who had been slain by a foreign enemy. Distasteful, but not worthy of anything more than an arrest and a criminal sentence.

When a knife hurled through the air and struck one of the looters in the temple, bringing him toppling to the ground, Hektor looked furiously at the soldier to his left who must have thrown it—taking judgment into his own hands was an affront when he had a prince of Troy beside him. But the soldier wasn't looking at the man who had been hit. He had turned around to stare, for the last moments of his life, as another projectile, an arrow this time, flew through the air and then through his eye and into his skull, the proximity splattering Hektor with the gory remains.

Shit. Not just raiders.

He ducked down and their group fanned out. His grip on his sword was practiced but this style of fighting was not. Hektor was used to squaring off on battlefields or in practice rings, always in the light of day. He was no thief who moved in the night, even if he did have the capacity for it.

Their enemy had brought torches, which made their numbers clearer to ascertain, but also threw the battle into chaotic bursts of light and shadow.

There were four Greek soldiers, but Hektor did not let them stand for even a breath. By the time the nearest one had nocked another arrow, there were

three. Hektor drove forward and took the archer out in a messy stab through his gut, leaving him dying and his friends scrambling as they found more resistance than they expected.

In the dark, another of Hektor's own men went down. He couldn't tell if it was Paris. For all the trouble his brother had given him, Hektor felt a surge of panic at the idea that he might be bleeding out, and he positioned himself to engage with the next soldier. They were fully armed, had not been traveling for stealth, and while these were not the premier soldiers of the Greek army, they had been well trained enough to know to gang up on Hektor.

Battling them both was something that would have been easy to do if he was fully armed with spear and shield, and if it were daylight, but impossible in the night with his short sword alone. He felt a hot tearing of an arrow through the tendon of his shoulder—either one of them had picked up the fallen archer's kit, or there was another bowman among them.

Hektor would have been worried, had a blade not erupted through the chest of the man currently engaging him, had he not toppled forward to reveal Sarpedon standing on the other side, blood spatter already streaking through his hair, which was as bright white-gray as his father's thunderclouds.

Hektor turned to face the only remaining soldier (the looters, possessing some amount of sense or fear, had run). As they squared off, Sarpedon yelled at Hektor to duck and then, without waiting to determine whether Hektor would make good on his orders, swung his sword to decapitate the man who had shot Hektor in a single swoop.

"Paris—" the skirmish hadn't lasted long, but Hektor had seen one of their men fall.

"He's fine." Sarpedon stamped out one of the torches the Greek soldiers had dropped before it lit the burned-out shell of a village aflame once again. Paris, looking less thrilled at the concept of a covert mission than he had been at the outset of the expedition, approached them from wherever he'd run to.

"I don't appreciate you shoving me down like that," he told Sarpedon. His arms were folded and he was clutching at his opposite forearm hard enough to leave marks.

"You wouldn't be alive if I hadn't. Hektor, should we keep looking or should we go? Doubtless they'll seen reinforcements, and it seems our other two didn't make it." Sarpedon was investigating the bodies, and ensuring that they all had actually slipped into death. "No, they—you were hit?"

"It's not terrible," Hektor said. He had a hand clapped over the wound to staunch the bleeding, the shaft standing out between his fingers. It had gone clean through, so at least he wouldn't have to suffer the agony of having an arrowhead dug out of his flesh. "I won't be of any help if we're attacked again, though. We need to turn back."

"Ought we to do something about..." Paris gestured at the arrow-shaft sticking out of Hektor's shoulder. "That?"

"No. Taking it out while I cannot immediately have it tended to will only cause more damage." At least Paris' idiot questions were enough to keep him distracted from the stomach-lurching throb of pain in his shoulder. He closed his teeth so tightly he could feel them squeak, trying his best to walk upright without slumping.

"You shouldn't have taken me," Paris said. It didn't come with any sort of rueful self-deprecation, just honest apology. "Someone else would have protected you better."

"I'm fine. I'll have a healer look at it as soon as we return." The walls of Troy rose high before them, and Hektor quickened his gait, keeping his strides smooth so as not to jostle the wound. All he wanted was for this to be over, to have the wound bandaged and to lie in his bed, with Andromache chiding him for taking a hit like that. He willed his mind to dissociate from the present, focusing only on when this would all be over.

It was the only clear way to cope with much of anything.

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

Apollo comes to Hektor's side in a difficult moment, and proceeds to make that moment much more difficult.

[Chapter Illustration](#)

Notes for the Chapter:

Hektor/Apollo time is HERE bayBEE!!

When Hektor reached his rooms at the palace, there was no healer waiting for him, not even Andromache, who had tended to his wounds plenty of times and was not squeamish. There was an empty room, with a tub of water so warm it was steaming, fresh towels laid out on the bed and rolls of bandages that were clean and white.

"Oh, well that won't be too tough to take care of."

The low, melodic voice was one Hektor recognized, and it made the agony of the wound seem lighter in comparison. Please, gods, let him deal with anything but...

Apollo emerged from behind one of the columns edging the room, his footsteps light and his smile golden. He was as Hektor often saw him (although gods frequently changed their shape), tall and slender, with slim wrists and ankles, eyes like bright coins and a face as pretty as a girl's. He radiated divinity, bright enough that he was horrible to look at for long amounts of time. He burned your eyes.

"I thought I was waiting on a healer," Hektor said.

Apollo spread his arms grandly. The gesture was slow; he never wanted to move quickly when Hektor was in pain. It was as if he said *you can wait a little longer*. "What better healer are you going to get? Would you spurn my assistance?"

"Of course not, my lord." Hektor could never spurn his assistance, nor his advances, knowing full well what might happen. His own sister, a pious devotee of Lord Apollo, was cursed with madness after rejecting him. (And who could even say what their honored patron had in store for Cassandra's twin.)

"Good boy." Apollo appeared younger than him and yet addressed him in diminutives. He reached for Hektor, who couldn't help flinching. "Be still, my dear, I will not hurt you."

This was untrue.

Apollo eased him out of his clothing, tearing at the cloth around where the arrow had struck him. It tore like wet paper under his hands. His skin was hot where it brushed Hektor's, and although the warmth itself was pleasant, he shuddered, anticipating what would come next.

"This really is not serious enough that it requires your attention, Lord Apollo," he said. "Andromache could take care of it easily."

Apollo clicked his tongue disapprovingly, giving a slow shake of his head which made his long, ornamental earrings sway, another bright glint among the streaks of gold hair intermixed with black. "Don't be ridiculous, human hands would heal this imperfectly," he said. "You would be sore for weeks and what if you developed an infection, festering in here until you are feverish on your deathbed?" As he dictated all the ways Hektor might suffer, the pain in his shoulder worsened, turned from an active throb into a sickening ache, and his forehead pricked with sweat and his stomach churned as Apollo's prediction made his wound turn sick and untended.

Hektor could smell it, even, and he turned his head so he wouldn't have to look. "All right. Please, take care of it." Instantly, the sensation returned to its previous state, still aching but nowhere near as disgusting.

"No need to wake your wife, anyhow. And if you are so impassioned from your fight that you are filled with need to make love to somebody out of gratefulness that you have survived—a strange mortal behavior but one I have observed nonetheless—well, there is no need to bother her for that, either." He said this while slipping off Hektor's belt and allowing the rest of his clothing to drop in a soft thump against the stone floor.

"I promise that is not a concern," Hektor said. "I am hurt and I am tired. All I want is to rest."

Apollo's fingertips lifted his chin, forcing Hektor's eyes to meet his. "I will take care of you," he said. "You know that I will."

"Yes, my lord." The last scar from Apollo's care for him was still yet to fade.

Apollo gathered Hektor close to his chest while he removed the arrow, and despite any disaffection for the god, it was a comfort to lean into him. Hektor focused on the heat of Apollo's body instead of the pain of the arrow-shaft sliding free. This, Apollo did with no godly magic, just his own hand, drawing the straight wooden shaft in a slow drag. Hektor couldn't help but lean his forehead against Apollo's chest, his eyes gritted shut, a scent like honey which he assumed was ambrosia clinging to Apollo and filling his senses.

"There, dear prince, just hold on to me."

Hektor hadn't realized he was doing it until Apollo noted it in his slippery whisper of a voice. His uninjured arm was around Apollo's waist, clutching tight at the rich, heavy fabric Apollo was draped in. His mouth dropped open as he breathed through the pain, leaving condensation against the smooth skin of Apollo's chest, bared by the cut of his clothing. Hektor was pressing so close he was going to come away from this with pressure marks from Apollo's necklace on his forehead.

"You're all right," Apollo cooed, a mockery of comfort, doling out condescensions with poorly contained glee. He liked to watch Hektor come back together under his hands. The fact that this required Hektor to be taken

apart in the first place was inconsequential. But Hektor had to be thankful, because on more than one occasion, Apollo had healed him from wounds that would have been mortal.

There was a rattle as the arrow-shaft dropped to the ground, and the bleeding worsened with the wound opened anew. He could feel it rolling down his chest and his ribcage to his hip, his muscles trembling in his shoulder as his body protested the injury. Apollo let it go on.

Apollo could have sealed up the wound immediately. When Hektor had been stabbed straight through the belly and had seconds before his insides fell out of the open slash, Apollo righted him in an instant flash of light. Instead of doing this, he waited. And Hektor knew what he was waiting on.

"Please," Hektor said.

There was a sudden coolness over his skin where it was cleansed of his spilled blood, and then a searing heat at the site of the wound. Hektor shouted, breathing harder, his body shaking all over and sweating as the shock of the pain ran through him. Apollo's healing doled out all the suffering the wound would have caused you in one moment.

Hektor bit down, and probably would have snapped through his own tongue, that was what happened to men when they were hurt so completely, although Apollo could have healed that, too. Instead, Apollo shoved his thumb between Hektor's molars. His jaw could not work hard enough for his teeth to pierce a god's skin.

When it was over, Apollo's finger remained there, hooked behind his teeth, petting at his tongue. The wound sealing over left a golden glow, like all his scars that Apollo had touched. Some of them shimmered brighter than others; the mortal wound in his belly was so bright it shone through a thin layer of clothing. This one was just as bright, but it would fade, like the others, until it only glowed when everything around was dark. Hektor briefly wondered if the god's-light limning his old wounds had been what alerted the Greek soldiers to their presence today.

Apollo pulled his finger free of Hektor's mouth but kept his hands on his chin, stroking through the coarseness of his beard. He was giving him an expectant look.

"Thank you," Hektor said. It was not hollow. Apollo's healing may have hurt worse than anything Hektor had ever felt, but it left behind a sense of euphoria, blooming through his chest and his stomach, making his head spin like he was drunk but without the nausea of too much wine. His cheeks always pinched in a smile, whether he tried to or not. He would sleep well.

"You honor me, Hektor of Troy."

He always would. Dutiful sacrifices, daily prayers, and obedient bends to Apollo's will, because when all the facets of the war stacked up together, Hektor knew he would never survive without his shining patron.

Apollo's hands slipped down his sides and Hektor could feel the grime and the sandy soil he had crouched in sloughing off his body. He was already hard; this was another effect of that euphoric high, and Apollo pulled him

closer, so that this, too, was pressed to his warmth. He floated comfortably in it.

Maybe there would someday come a time at which Apollo's healing did not provoke pleasant feelings, but as it stood today, he was happy and blissful, wanted to smile, wanted to laugh. He wanted to get into his bed beside his wife and tease her awake, sharing some of this glowing feeling. She always liked when he came back this way, ebullient and attentive only to pleasure, the painful worries of the rest of the war fading as easily as the pain of his wounds.

These days, Apollo didn't often let him go back to Andromache.

"I promise that is not a concern? 'I am hurt and tired and want to rest'? I think you may have some words you need to swallow," Apollo said, in that musical, sing-song voice of his that always sounded like a tease.

"I truly am tired," Hektor said, his logical brain fighting through the haze of bliss. He knew that if he did not rest he would be exhausted in the morning. If he did rest he would probably be exhausted anyway. Following the euphoria there was always a drop into a tiredness so deep he sometimes could not be woken by anybody.

"Not yet, I don't think," Apollo said. "Let me take care of you properly and then we can get you cleaned up and sent off to bed."

He knew, even as he drew Apollo to the bed, that he would regret this later.

Apollo's smile curled up like Eros' bowstring being drawn. "There's a good boy," he said, shedding his own clothing as he followed Hektor, but leaving his jewelry on.

The golden light that clung to Apollo's whole being matched the sealed cracks in Hektor's skin, and as he neared, those spots he had healed shone brighter, even more so when Apollo waved a hand and all the torches in the room went out. Even when Apollo closed his eyes, the light glowed from behind his lids. Even when Hektor closed his eyes, he could still sense it, warm and red.

"Good," Apollo repeated, a hand in the center of Hektor's chest, pressing him down. The rush of Apollo's magic still had him in complete overwhelm, and he felt as if he might have been floating if not for his god's hand pressing him down.

Apollo wore his hair long, all the way to his knees, and it was tied off today in segments with metal cuffs, which were cold when they rolled against Hektor's skin as Apollo leaned in to kiss him, a soft brush of lips over the wound he had just healed. He licked the shape of the scar he had formed, the light from his mouth joining with the light from Hektor's skin. There was no such thing as covert darkened lovemaking with Lord Apollo.

"Look at you," he breathed. Hektor said nothing. Hektor kept his eyes closed, and just let Apollo's touch warm him. "Soon enough, there will be no place on you my hands haven't healed."

He shifted downward and this prompted Hektor to look, watching the gleam of his eye and the fold of his smile as he trailed hot breath down Hektor's ribs. For a moment, Hektor thought Lord Apollo was going to do something as impossible as *putting Hektor's cock in his mouth*, but all he wanted to do was kiss his other most prominent god-healed scar, the mark on his belly.

His power bled into Hektor where Hektor had once bled, and he couldn't help the noise that slipped from his lips or the way his hands twisted in the sheets, wanting to pull at Apollo's hair but still too apprehensive to touch him.

Apollo's mouth on his would-be mortal wound warmed him through his gut. This was how he knew there was scarring inside him as well as out. There really was no place on him Apollo's magic had not touched. Apollo had knit him back together from his center out, and when he was drunk on Apollo's magic, this slow, suffusing warmth made him hard enough to ache.

Once again, Apollo was waiting.

"*Please*," Hektor said for the second time that night, more primed to it now. It was less embarrassing to beg when he was spread out on his bed waiting on sex instead of healing. Waiting on Apollo to take him apart rather than put him together.

Apollo's fingers met Hektor's lips, pressing inside the way his thumb had before. Hektor could feel Apollo's magic continuing to slip into the cracks of him, golden light sealing over little cuts on his lips where he'd bitten them. They'd shine for a few hours, but that light wouldn't stick around. It

would simply serve to keep Apollo's mark on him for the night. Andromache would be the only one to see them, and she wouldn't ask about it. At least Apollo wasn't leaving him with an array of glowing love bites tonight.

Sometimes, when he was not as lazy and lust-addled, he thought about digging his teeth in when Apollo put something in his mouth. Today, he was buzzing with the high of being stitched back together and he did not want to do anything to prevent the slow progression toward Apollo fucking him.

His patron liked to take his time.

He never stopped *talking*, gentle coos and encouragement that felt saccharine and condescending coming from a man who knew Hektor could take this. A man who knew that if he pushed Hektor too hard he could fix him up anyway.

He just liked talking to Hektor when Hektor could not respond for the gag of Apollo's fingers in his mouth.

"Good boy," he called Hektor again as he pulled them free.

"Don't call me that." Hektor was frequently deferential but knew Apollo did not mind his sniping so much when he was pulling Hektor's legs open.

The pendant that rested in the center of Apollo's chest, shaped like the sun and just as golden, dropped to rest against Hektor's skin as Apollo levered himself up and held himself above Hektor, licking over the newest scars he had healed, the tiny marks on Hektor's lips, inconsequential enough that they certainly were below a god's attention.

Unfortunately, the gods rarely found Hektor below their attention.

Apollo swallowed his gasp as his fingers, wet from Hektor's mouth, dug at his entrance. His magic on Hektor would easily have been enough to allow him to put his cock inside. Hektor was relaxed and loose from the high of it. But this was more teasing. Apollo watched his face twist, liked the grimace as he was fucked just as much as the grimace as an arrow was pulled from his flesh.

In these moments, when their eyes met, gold and brown, godly and so, so ordinary, Hektor wondered as to the machinations of his patron's mind. Ordinarily he tossed them aside as too far above his comprehension to even be worth considering, but right now, Apollo seemed more human than ever. He certainly did not love Hektor as anything more than a plaything, but this was the face of a man who *could* love. Were he mortal, Hektor would ask who hurt him.

Hektor wondered who hurt him, anyway.

He finally sank a hand into Apollo's hair, shut his eyes, and kissed him to drown out the idea that maybe this could be anything more than a diversion for a god who was going to let Hektor go to his death someday.

Because that was the truth of it, wasn't it? Even as Apollo kissed him, even as Apollo's fingers retreated and his cock pushed inside, claiming Hektor as his own, Hektor knew that one day there would be a mortal wound Apollo did not heal. And he would never know which it was going to be, unless Apollo did him the honor of giving him a moment's warning before he let Hektor go to Hades.

Who would Apollo make the vessel for his affections next? One of Hektor's brothers? Sisters? Would that he had Cassandra's strength, to tell Apollo to fuck off. But Hektor had too much to lose.

"Hektor," Apollo sang his name, cajoling. Like he was prompting a child to remember their manners.

"Thank you," Hektor obliged.

"There we are." Apollo fucked him *indulgently*, slow rolls of his hips that matched the ebb and flow of the pleasure that ensconced Hektor in the wake of Apollo's magic. He put his hand over the newly-healed scar while he did it. Kissed a mark on Hektor's neck that he had healed, just a nick that had needed a god's touch even less than this wound had. Apollo had really made him wait on the healing on that occasion, hadn't fixed him up until he was already inside Hektor, fucking him from behind and sealing his lips over the wound, tongue slipping in like he was making love to Hektor's pain.

Hektor tipped his head back, eyes rolling shut again, knowing Apollo was still watching him. He could feel his god's eyes on him like a brand. Apollo

put a hand under the hinge of Hektor's knee, thumb pressing into another glowing scar, when an enemy sword had ripped the tendon here. He used this grip to prise Hektor's legs further apart, giving him more room to move, to take Hektor rougher.

At what point had he learnt that this particular rhythm meant Apollo was close?

"You know," Apollo told him, as the magic churning inside Hektor built to a peak, getting him off as easily as a hand stroking his cock would have, "the face you make when you come is the same as the one you make when I heal you."

He didn't know whether this was the truth or just another way to tease him, but he also couldn't help the way this knowledge made him grind into Apollo's touch with more ferocity, his back arching, meeting him for each thrust. The fight he'd just been in hadn't made him sweat this much, Apollo's sweltering body heat and rough sex pushing him to every brink. A position like this should have been gentle, it was how Hektor slept with his wife. Apollo was not ever gentle with him.

When he dug his fingernails into Apollo's shoulders, unable to keep himself from gripping tight while he came, he left divots of shining white light. They faded by the time Hektor was finished spilling between them—there was no mark he could leave on Apollo—but he looked at the place they had been.

The warm, comforting hold of Apollo's power on him started to fade almost immediately, and he moved impatiently in Apollo's hold, trying to shift back on the bedcovers. Apollo had a firm grip on his hips and his face buried in Hektor's shoulder again, kissing and licking the mark once again.

"Pull out," Hektor said, although his arms were still around Apollo's shoulders.

"Give me a moment, my dear prince." He called Hektor 'prince' like it was diminutive, which, to a god, it probably was. He had not slowed down for a second, and Hektor was beginning to feel oversensitive, every drag of Apollo's cock inside him making him squirm.

"Pull out."

Apollo sighed, and Hektor almost expected him not to listen, but he finally drew back, his cock slipping free of Hektor's body, leaving a slight feeling of emptiness in his wake that didn't at all compare to the hollowness in Hektor's chest. "You are lucky I like you," he said.

Hektor said nothing. He felt very unlucky, actually. His eyes closed, and he turned his head, not wanting to watch Apollo stroke himself off over him. Even so, his senses were not entirely shut off, he could hear the slide of Apollo's own hand over his cock, the soft sighs and labored breathing. Even in this, Apollo sounded divine. He was the god of music, and his voice lingered in the air and sounded beautiful to Hektor's ear even though all the rest of him was souring.

He felt another spasm of heat through his gut as Apollo's come spattered over the scar on his belly, setting off the lingering traces of his power that lived inside Hektor.

"There. I knew you would need me to take care of you," Apollo said.

"I thank you for your care and attention, my lord." It came out flat, tasted bitter on his tongue.

"Let me get you cleaned up."

"There is no need."

"Hush. You would go to bed just like this, I'm sure." Apollo spoke as if he knew Hektor, as if he had ever done more than slip free of Hektor's bed as soon as he was finished, often before Hektor got off.

He left for a moment and Hektor scrubbed a hand down his face. *Next time I will not go where I know he could be waiting*, he told himself. *Straight to the physician, nowhere else.*

As if he had not said these words to himself so many times already. As if Apollo would not simply peel away the bandages and expose an already-treated wound to tend to it himself. As if Hektor did not press his fingers

against the scars his god had left on him when the night was late and Andromache was in her own rooms and Hektor touched himself.

Apollo cleaned him with a soft cloth, kissed him on the forehead as he left, like a simulacrum of a lover's touch.

Hektor did not open his eyes until the room was empty and he was alone again.

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